Abstract and Keywords

In past research on moral development, moral values and cultural considerations have been widely ignored. Therefore, questions of universality and cultural specificity in the development of moral values are addressed here. First, the author reviews preconditions of moral value development, including precursors of self-construal. The internalization process of moral values reveals the importance of self-regulation capacities and the motivating dynamic of moral values. Second, the focus is on the development of moral values in diverse cultural contexts. The multilevel structure of socialization conditions is examined in light of different cultural models for moral values and their emotional components. The concluding part suggests broadening research on moral development by focusing on implications of ongoing socioeconomic and cultural changes and cultural encounters.

Keywords: moral values, development, culture, self-construal, socialization, self-regulation, sensitivity

The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

Our own studies on the development of prosocial behavior and aggression in diverse cultures started by observing interactions among children and asking adolescent participants to react to diverse scenarios. In one scenario, the first sequence described Helen and Andrea meeting to watch a movie together. Being late on their way to the cinema, they observe an older woman trying to reach the bus while some groceries are dropping from her basket. Helen approaches the woman, picks up the goods, replacing them in the basket, and rejoin Andrea who has stayed back. The participants were asked: Who is acting in line with moral values, Andrea or Helen, and why do you think so? In the second sequence of the same scenario, Helen asks Andrea why she did not join in helping the women to reach the bus in time. Andrea, in turn, asks Helen why she has humiliated the women by interfering and underlining the woman’s weakness. Andrea explains that ignor-
The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

Following the report of the actors’ reasoning, the participants were asked: Who is acting in line with moral values, Andrea or Helen? Answers to the first question revealed cultural differences among the participants (p. 146) but answers to the second question did not. Having provided convincing moral reasoning for their different behavior (helping; not helping), both Andrea and Helen evaluated each other as truly following moral values. An agent’s communication of culture-sensitive moral reasoning thus may change the negative moral evaluation of an observer from a different culture.

This result underlines that prosocial moral values may motivate different, at first sight seemingly immoral behavior which, at second sight, are reflecting prosocial intentions and cultural values. When the (prosocial) moral value of face saving inhibits focusing on a person’s mishap, less direct helping occurs.

Cultural encounters may activate potential dynamics of conflicting moral values; however, they may induce culture-sensitive communication and perspective taking, reducing mutual misunderstandings. Depending on the cultural context, the cultural meaning of the situation, and the actor’s intention, either helping or not helping are morally right or wrong. In a cultural context valuing face saving, helping in public may be wrong since it indicates a target’s shortcomings. The preceding example underlines the importance of the cultural meaning of a person’s moral intention and behavior, revealing whether the behavior (helping, refraining from help) is motivated by moral values.

However, traditional research on morality and development of moral values is widely ignoring a cultural perspective, thus risking a Eurocentric bias. Therefore, this chapter attempts to shed light on the cultural values underlying the development of moral values in cultural contexts. First, I review mainstream approaches to the developmental of moral values where cultural aspects were rather downplayed. Second, I focus on the development of moral values in cultural contexts, taking into account culture-specific socialization conditions influenced by the cultural mindset. Third, I will suggest some promising avenues for future research on the development of moral values, including a cultural perspective.

Development of Morality and Moral Values: General Processes

Theoretical Perspectives

From an evolutionary theoretical perspective, the development of moral values is related to fostering cooperation and altruism as evolutionarily advantageous forms of social behavior. Humans have the cognitive ability to take the perspective of another person; they can develop a theory of mind, can view themselves and other persons from a third person’s perspective (taking a bird’s eye), and they can experience emotions of justice and injustice and moral emotions of shame and guilt (Tomasello, 2016). Evolutionary the-
The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

ory thus integrates cognitive and emotional capacities of humans as universal conditions for morality and moral values. This integrative approach has been widely ignored in traditional research on moral development.

The cognitive developmental model of Kohlberg (1984) and Piaget (1932/1967) assumes a universal process in moral development resulting “from the gradual construction of moral concepts and norms through the maturation of cognitive functions as the child interacts socially” (Buon, 2017, p. 431). Studies on moral cognitions (moral reasoning) using moral dilemata to assess children’s and adolescents’ stage of (normative) development of morality have mainly focused on issues of justice. This cognitive view has been challenged by recent approaches suggesting that moral decisions and behavior are informed by sociomoral intuitions about how to interact. Recent research conceives of moral behavior as emotional and quasi automatic while moral reasoning is seen as related to rationalization of judgments, decisions, and behavior (Haidt, 2001).

Widely neglected aspects in past research are moral values and their development, encompassing not only cognitive and emotional but also motivational elements. Values are conceived of as desirable goals, closely related to one’s self construal and serving as guiding principles and criteria for selecting and justifying actions (Schwartz, 1992). Moral values are of special importance in the study of moral development based on both automatic sociomoral intuitions and rational, sophisticated sociomoral evaluations. Moral values are rather stable, motivational dynamic beliefs underlying moral decisions and behavior.

Empirical Studies on Moral and Prosocial Development

Interpersonal moral values informed by moral intuitions, compassion, and reasoning are assumed to subordinate individual interests to benefit others. In the tradition of prosocial motivation, moral values have been conceptualized as prosocial values, motivating voluntary behavior intended to improve or stabilize the well-being of persons or social groups, for example by providing support, justice, or protection. A precondition for prosocial behavior, cooperation, and fairness is the focus on interpersonal relations and communal goals.

Present empirical research on moral development mostly focuses on the development of moral reasoning, prosocial behavior, and self-regulation as influenced by interactions between biological and environmental factors (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Knafo-Noam, 2015). Research on the development of moral reasoning is building on arguments from evolutionary psychology, which is studying early precursors of morality in infants and toddlers, such as emotional contagion, empathy, helping, and cooperative behavior (for a summary, see Eisenberg et al., 2015).

Research on the development of cooperation and prosocial behavior has revealed certain universal patterns which may be seen as the basis of morality and moral development. Spontaneous helping behavior and cooperation in early childhood underline the universal motivational dynamics of precursors of moral behavior (Laible & Karahuta, 2014; Tomasello, 2016). Spontaneous prosocial behavior changes to more differentiated, delib-
Cognitive, emotional, and social processes contribute to prosocial motivation, such as evaluating the situation, the relationship with the target, the person in need, and one’s self. Awareness of a person’s need in inducing emotional processes of empathy or distress may not always result in helping (e.g., when the observer is lacking competence or self-efficacy or when the target is a member of an out-group). An increase of prosocial behavior and cooperation can be observed in children’s (and also adult’s) interactions with in-group compared to out-group members. This bias, assumedly rooted in evolution, may result in antisocial behavior while using prosocial moral values for justification (Kornadt, 2012; Trommsdorff, 2012b). In adolescence, the relationship quality is the main motivating factor for helping familiar persons (Padilla-Walker, Carlo, & Memmott-Elison, 2017). Further, dispositional factors such as sympathy and moral values moderate helping strangers. Age-related changes in prosocial motivation are moderated by demographic, dispositional, and relational factors.

Expecting positive reactions and reciprocity from the recipient of help, social approval from bystanders, or personal satisfaction and positive self-regard may all contribute to motivate prosocial behavior and cooperation (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2014). Accordingly, prosocial behavior may not necessarily be intrinsically motivated by moral values alone.

To summarize, prosocial behavior is an example for moral behavior as long as it is motivated by prosocial moral values related to prioritizing other- versus self-focused outcomes.

Early Development of Moral Values

Research on the development of moral values has focused on cognitive, emotional, motivational, and social development, conceiving of morality as based on rationality, on emotions, or on both. Preverbal infants of about 5 months reveal sophisticated sociomoral abilities; they can distinguish among good (helpful) and bad (hindering) behaviors, preferring “good” and rejecting “bad persons” (Bloom, 2013; Buon, 2017). Precursors of moral values are emerging early in life when infants’ readily provide help. Around the second year, when becoming aware of their self as different from others due to cognitive development (Harter, 2012), infants may experience sympathy (as different from emotional contagion and empathy). Infants’ impulsive and spontaneous helping changes to young children’s sympathy-based prosocial behavior, forming the foundation for later altruistic values, compassion, and social competence (Eisenberg et al., 2015). During the second year, infants tend to engage in cooperative behavior with shared goals and shared intentions (Tomasello, 2007) and to follow rules of conduct (Kochanska, Tjebkes, & Forman, 1998). Prosocial behaviors such as helping, sharing, and comforting develop within affectively charged interactions with others. Around 3 or 4 years, children develop the ability...
to understand the intentions of others and reflect on mental states (theory of mind [ToM]). Selective sharing in 4- to 5-year-olds versus 3-year-old preschoolers develops due to sociocognitive mechanism underlying costly versus noncostly sharing (with disliked vs. liked persons or in-group vs. out-group members). Four-year-olds are able to envision past and future states of desire and to engage in intentional self-regulation (e.g., delay of gratification). During further cognitive, emotional, and social development, children can internalize the expectations of their attachment figures (e.g., caretakers) and reference group members (Trommsdorff, 2017a). Different forms of prosocial behavior are based on distinct mechanisms, partly following developmental pathways (see reviews and studies by Eisenberg et al., 2006; Eisenberg et al., 2015; Warneken & Tomasello, 2006; Zahn-Waxler, & Smith, 1992). Accordingly, Padilla-Walker and Carlo (2014) posit a multidimensional approach to the development of prosociality.

Gradually children integrate parental and societal values, ideals, and norms into their self-system while parents, teachers, and peers provide external encouragements which may later foster self-encouragement and habitually trigger the associated moral behavior. At school age, children’s self-evaluations and goals become more realistic (Harter, 2012). The expectations of significant others (even when these other persons are not present) are integrated into the children’s self-construal, shaping their worldview and their self-relevant beliefs and standards. These developmental processes influence the internalization of moral values (e.g., helping, loyalty, modesty, justice, interpersonal responsibility), thus motivating moral behavior. Thereby, the goal-directed and emotion-focused quality of moral values become part of children’s active self-construal, guiding their further development and moral behavior (Trommsdorff, 2017a). Moral values as self-relevant goals link moral motivation and moral behavior during development in context.

The development of moral values and behavior as part of development of the self is closely related to the capacity and motivation for self-regulation. Moral values are linked to behavior through self-regulation—the intentional management of action toward achieving self-relevant goals. Successful self-regulation develops from early external guidance and caretakers’ support of internalized self-generated self-regulation, including executive control, attention focus, and regulation of internal mental states and behavior (Jaramillo, Rendón, Muñoz, Weis, & Trommsdorff, 2017; Trommsdorff, 2007, 2009, 2012a).

Self-regulation as an important component of moral values includes the regulation (and inhibition) of negative emotions like distress, anger, disgust—emotions which preclude prosocial behavior. Self-regulation promotes an increasing capacity for empathic concern, perspective taking, and stability of prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Trommsdorff, 2012a).

In summary, the development of self-regulation is guided by the intention to regulate emotion and behavior in order to pursue and attain individual or collectively shared goals and desired outcomes. Self-regulation is fostered by the internalization of moral values while at the same time fostering the development of moral values and moral behavior.
Thus, the development of moral values is part of the agentic development of self-construal and self-regulation in social interactions with caregivers and the wider social world.

So far, research on preconditions for the development of moral values focuses on universals, downplaying cultural factors. In the next section, I review cultural and interindividual differences in the development of moral values related to cultural factors in value orientations and socialization conditions.

Socialization and Development of Moral Values in the Cultural Context

The above-mentioned example of Helen’s reasons for helping and Andreas’s reasons for refraining from help (and their respective evaluation of each other’s behavior) demonstrates different subjective beliefs about what is best for the target, presumably influenced by cultural values and norms. Effective prosocial behavior depends on the empathic (“rational”) understanding of the victim’s individual and, moreover, culture-specific values and needs. Therefore, discussing the socialization and development of moral values has to consider the impact of cultural values.

Moral values, which guide individual goals and behavior during the life course, develop during the socialization processes in cultural contexts resulting from gene–environment interactions. A universal precursor for the development of moral values is an infant’s endowment with the disposition to recognize human beings as intentional agents with whom they may want to cooperate. Children’s further development is fueled by responding to their social environment influenced by genetic (Fortuna & Knafo, 2014), ecological (Whiting & Whiting, 1975), and cultural factors (De Guzman, Do, & Kok, 2014; Fasoli, this volume, Ch. 26; Miller & Kallberg-Shroff, this volume, Ch. 4; Mayer & Trommsdorff, 2012), including parental and social agents’ contributions (Bornstein, 2002; Padilla-Walker, 2014; Padilla-Walker & Memmott-Elison, this volume, Ch.25; Trommsdorff, 2015a).

Environmental and Biological Conditions in Socialization of Moral Values

Recent approaches in cultural psychology of socialization no longer ignore biological properties, recognizing them at the same time as the ecological and cultural environment of the developing child. Moral development is seen as based on interactions among biological and sociocultural phenomena, acknowledging interactive processes among the environment and the caretakers’ and child’s biology and psychology (German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, 2014). However, research on the development of moral values informed by both biology and culture is very rare.

Instead of isolating single factors and ignoring their integration in a system of interacting socialization conditions, the socialization process is conceived of as operating on multiple interconnected levels with permeable boundaries (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Ac-
The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

cordingly, cultural values and beliefs are seen here as interacting with aspects on the macro level (e.g., the social, political, economic, legal, and educational system), the micro level of socialization conditions in the family and school, and at the individual level of values, goals, and behaviors, including moral values. Accordingly, the child interacts reciprocally with the immediate environment (e.g., the family), including culturally shaped bidirectional effects of the caretaker’s and child’s behavior. The socialization agents (e.g., parents, teachers) shape children’s development in line with prevailing cultural norms and values. Thus, parental goals and parenting behavior differ among different cultures; they also function differently in children’s development since they are moderated by the cultural context and by parent–child interactions (Bornstein, 2002; Rothbaum & Trommsdorff, 2007; Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003; Trommsdorff, 2017b). Bidirectionality in parent–child relations indicates children’s agency in influencing their own development by creating a specific developmental niche through active interactions with their environments (Trommsdorff, 2012a). Children’s agency is guided by their culture-informed self-construal and their knowledge about cultural values and social expectations, thereby shaping the development of their own moral values.

Further, the socialization process is influenced by biological factors which in turn are interrelated with culture (e.g., Greenfield, 2002; Kornadt, 2002). Fortuna and Knafo’s (2014) discussion on the genetic and parental contributions to prosocial behavior underlines the multiple interactions between genetic and environmental factors and their impact on aspects of moral values. For example, the bidirectionality of caretakers’ and children’s behaviors partly depends on biological conditions such as the child’s and caretaker’s temperament impacting the child’s self-regulation competence, an important factor in the development of moral values.

Biologically based processes of parent–child interactions influence the development of important components of moral values: mental representations of the self and the social world and their integration into relatively stable internal working models (Bowlby, 1969). Research has revealed that attachment security, based on a positive relationship between children and their caregivers, promotes children’s willingness to internalize rules of conduct and emotion regulation (Calkins & Leerkes, 2011; Pasco Fearon & Belsky, 2011), a precondition for the development of moral values (Heikamp, Trommsdorff, & Fäsche, 2013; Thompson, Meyer, & McGinley, 2006).

Attachment is rooted in biological factors, and culture is influential as well. The assumption of attachment security to (p. 151) be universally associated with caretakers’ sensitivity has been challenged by Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, and Morelli (2000), who showed that previous research has ignored cultural differences in the meaning of caretaker sensitivity and related parental goals. Especially among Euro-American countries, parents want to foster their child’s independence, whereas among East Asian countries, parents want their children to prioritize interdependence. Parents’ response to their child’s behavior may be seen as “sensitive” if it is in line with the respective cultural model. However, the same response may not be seen as sensitive from the perspective of a different cultural model (see our introductory example regarding the cultural meaning of
prosociality). Accordingly, different cultural contexts provide a different meaning regarding the kind and quality of socialization conditions and outcomes (Rothbaum & Trommsdorff, 2007; Trommsdorff, 2017b; Trommsdorff & Rothbaum, 2008; Trommsdorff & Cole, 2011). A major assumption based on this reasoning is that moral values develop according to culture-specific models of self and agency (Trommsdorff, 2009, 2012b, 2017a).

The constituent role of culture in biological processes is underlined by cultural neuroscience. While shaping biological processes in development, culture also selects from biology. A gene–culture interaction model reveals that psychological differences among cultures are linked to biological processes (e.g., brain changes due to cultural learning), as shown by research on gene–environment and gene–culture interactions, on physiological processes in different cultures, and on neural processes related to cultural differences in psychological outcomes (review by Sasaki & Kim, 2017). Environmental influences depend on biological factors. Culture matters, but genes predispose persons to be more or less susceptible to cultural socialization. Persons carrying the environmental susceptibility genes are more influenced by cultural values (norm sensitivity hypothesis) and show stronger cross-cultural differences; for example, stronger independent orientation in the United States and stronger interdependent orientation in Japan (Kitayama, King, Hsu, Liberzon, & Yoon, 2016). Individual differences in sensitivity to contextual influences may promote the development of moral values even in the case of a difficult and stressful family environment.

To summarize, research on the development of moral values should focus on both biological and cultural factors. Moreover, the cultural meaning of the socialization conditions for the caretakers and the child is important. Therefore, the next section discusses first cultural values, second moral values in different cultures, and third the role of cultural factors in the socialization and development of moral values.

**Culture and Values**

Here, culture is conceived of as a dynamic and multidimensional system based on widely shared value orientations (see Cohen, 2009; Lehman, Chiu, & Schaller, 2004; Matsumoto, 2001; Trommsdorff, 2017b). Culture is not a fixed categorical variable but rather a complex process, consisting of polyvalent elements related to cultural values and practices and contributing to cultural variations in individual development. In the process of adaptive interactions between humans and environment, culture is transmitted over time and generations; it consists of some temporal stability, certain boundaries, and shared components (Lehman et al., 2004).

Starting from a value-based conceptualizations of culture, Hofstede (1980) has classified national cultures based on the mapping of cultural value dimensions (e.g., individualism–collectivism). The “cultural dimensions” represent psychological traits serving as cultural indicators for cross-cultural comparisons. One of the dimensions, individualism–collectivism, defines the kind of cultural moral values prioritized in the respective cultur-
The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

al context. This approach has stimulated various studies on socialization and values in individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

Further dimensions of cultural variability as suggested by Gelfand et al. (2011) distinguish between “loose” and “tight” cultures, reflecting different attitudes toward norms. While “tight” nations are characterized by strong norms and a low tolerance of deviant behavior, “loose” nations prefer weak norms and a high tolerance of deviant behavior. This approach may allow us to distinguish norm-oriented and value-oriented moral values. Presumably, expectations of social benefits and costs (rewards and punishment) may be more relevant in tight nations where the development of moral values is rather understood as conformity with social norms. In loose nations, the internalization of moral standards is a basic prerequisite for moral values.

While the concept of culture underlying cross-cultural approaches has often been criticized as too broad, various psychological definitions of culture acknowledge the dynamics of culture and its many forms. Cohen (2009) suggests to focus on “cultural markers” such as region, socioeconomic status, and religion. While global indicators of culture on the national level may obscure relations between distal contextual factors and individual developmental outcomes, certain measures on the national context related to socialization and cultural values (e.g., World Values Surveys, Human Development Index) are useful for testing culture-sensitive psychological assumptions (e.g., Bond, Lun, & Li, 2012; Trommsdorff, 2009, 2012b). It is preferable to assess theoretically relevant mediators and moderators on the macro, meso, and micro levels of societies. Such multilevel analyses of different forms of culture may reveal which cultural variables and which of their relations can best predict developmental outcomes (e.g., Mayer et al., 2015).

Overall, research on cultural dimensions, markers, and models contributes to an improved psychological understanding of the meaning of culture, one focused on individual development as interrelated with culture. Cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism or tight and loose cultures are important to describe the cultural context and the related cultural mindset. The cultural model of independence and interdependence as suggested by Markus and Kitayama (1991) provides a fruitful integrative theoretical framework for cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes underlying culture-specific self-construals. The development of moral values can be seen as part of the individual’s self-construal due to their self-binding motivational quality. At the same time, moral values are shaped by the cultural model: “all selves are culture-specific selves that emerge as people actively adjust to their cultural environments, and all experience is at once both individual and cultural” (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997, p. 15). Individual agency is necessary when internalizing and acting in accord with cultural moral values, more or less related to an independent or interdependent cultural model (Miller, 1994; Trommsdorff, 2012a, 2012b, 2015b).

In summary, the prevailing cultural model, based on a culture-specific self- and worldview, is seen as the basis for moral development. Internalizing cultural values implies a commitment to related moral values, functioning as glue for the social group and foster-
Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

The question is how cultural psychology explains intra- and interindividual processes in the development of moral values in cultural contexts. Research on moral values has revealed multiple values in diverse cultures. For example, moral values have been described as either prioritizing individual- or social-oriented and independent or interdependent (e.g., individualistic and collectivistic) concerns. Schwartz’s (1992, 1996) influential theory on a universal value system focuses on self- and other-oriented values (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). Different from the universalistic approach, culture specificities of moral values are identified in the moral foundation theory (Graham & Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). “Honor” is suggested as another cultural mindset of moral values (Oyserman, 2017), functioning as a meaning-making framework of focal concern in collectivistic cultures and giving priority to an external evaluation of the self (in contrast to dignity as an intrinsic value of the self in individualistic cultures).

However, little research is available on the development of moral values. Miller (1994) and Jensen (2015a, 2015b) have promoted a culture-sensitive research on moral values and development, one bridging cultural and developmental perspectives (e.g., Miller, Akiyama, & Kapadia, 2017; Miller & Källberg-Schroff, this volume, Ch.4). A developmental approach on culture-specific moral values is the three ethics theory by Shweder and his colleagues (Jensen, 2015a, 2015b; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1990; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Moral values are assessed along a tripartite differentiation of three developmental trajectories: the Ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity. Beyond a global classification, specific types of a moral category are revealed. For example, the Ethics of Community includes both the Chinese concept of shame (Fung, 1999) and the Indian concept of role-based obligations (Miller, 1994). The answers can be coded into the different subcategories (e.g., “Community-Oriented Virtues” and “Duty to Others,” respectively). Research on the development of the three Ethics reveals some stabilities over the life span (e.g., autonomy concerns). Community concerns first focus on the family and later include societal concerns. The Ethic of Divinity is embraced in daily activities from early development and acquires the stable status of a moral value in the Hindu culture (Mishra, 2012; Pandya & Bhangaokar, 2015).

Cultural Mindset in the Development of Moral Values

Cultural and moral values constitute a cultural mindset developed through culture learning and based on socialization processes in interaction with biological factors. Cultural models shape caretaker’s self-construal and worldviews, their moral values and related child-rearing goals, and their behaviors contributing to the transmission of cultural values to offspring (Trommsdorff, 2009; 2017b).
The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

In a similar way, Super and Harkness (1986) conceive of the “developmental niche” as consisting of the physical and social setting, customs of child-rearing, and the psychology of caregivers (e.g., subjective beliefs, “cultural mindsets”) as part of the respective socialization and enculturation processes. Relating the cultural context and cultural values to parental values, goals, beliefs, and practices allows us to describe the culture-specific socialization of moral values.

Cultural Meaning in the Socialization of Values

Regarding the development of moral values in cultural context, effects of domain specificity and bidirectional influences between caretaker and child are moderated by the cultural context and the cultural mindset. Our own cross-cultural studies in Germany, the United States, Japan, Korea, and Brazil have revealed that the culture-specific mindset and related self-construal prioritizing independence and interdependence are mirrored in caretakers’ beliefs, naïve theories, moral values, goals, and behavior (Friedlmeier, Schäfermeier, Vasconcellos, & Trommsdorff, 2008; Schwarz, Schäfermeier, & Trommsdorff, 2005). For example, values of autonomy and relatedness and related parenting (e.g., sensitivity) have a different meaning in cultures favoring values of independence or interdependence (Rothbaum & Trommsdorff, 2007). Proactive sensitivity (intervening before their child experiences distress) is more often shown by Japanese and Indian mothers, influenced by a cultural model of interdependence and values of relatedness, whereas reactive sensitivity (waiting for their child’s expression of negative emotions like distress) is more common for mothers in Germany and the United States, who favor values of independence and self-actualization. When their sensitivity is displayed in accordance with the respective cultural model, caretakers are successful in promoting their child’s internalization of the respective cultural mindset and related moral values. These studies underline how important it is to understand the cultural meaning of different socialization practices, thereby contributing to answer the question of which parenting is most suitable to promote the internalization of culturally relevant moral values.

Whether moral values and prosocial behavior are activated when observing a person in need depends on the observer’s interpretation of the situation and attribution of the target’s mishap (as the introductory example has suggested).

Cultural Meaning of Emotion Socialization in the Development of Moral Values

Prominent theories in moral psychology have suggested that emotion processes are primary mechanisms in the development of prosocial behavior. Moral emotions (Haidt, 2003) and sociomoral emotions (Mascolo & Fischer, 2007) have been discussed in theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2015, for reviews). The role of emotional components in the development of prosocial moral values has highlighted the strong emotional reactions of young children before, during, or after initiating prosocial actions (Dunn, 1988; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & King, 1979).
Guilt and shame (precursors for prosocial behavior at preschool age) are moral emotions relevant for prosocial motivation and values (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Guilt motivates reparative behavior in early development, serving as a precursor of moral values of justice (Vaish, Carpenter, & Tomasello, 2016). Guilt has been considered as motivating altruism and other-oriented concern (for a review, see Tangney & Dearing, 2003). Guilt—compared to shame-prone younger and older participants showed less anger arousal and less malevolent intentions and aggression (Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996). Guilt, a kind of self-conscious moral emotion, has often been described as a “good” moral emotion, motivating children early in life to engage in prosocial behavior. However, guilt has its dark side, inducing unfair allocations in multiparty interactions (Feng, Xu, Xu, & Zhang, 2017). Both, guilt- and shame-related emotions are associated with empathic helping in toddlers, but they may motivate or inhibit prosocial behavior in further development of moral values and behavior. The development (p. 155) of guilt and shame follows interrelated trajectories which may vary depending on environmental conditions (Mascolo & Fischer, 2007, p. 92).

Therefore, the study of emotion socialization in cultural contexts is relevant for research on the development of moral values. Precursors of moral values develop during emotion socialization, a cultural process by which caretakers transfer social skills and knowledge for regulating emotional arousal and expression of emotions (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998). This implies the culture-sensitive development of emotions and their regulation (Cole, Tamang, & Shrestha, 2006; Cole & Tan, 2015; Friedlmeier & Trommsdorff, 1999; Holodynski & Friedlmeier, 2012; Mishra, 2012; Trommsdorff & Cole, 2011).

Conceiving of emotions as “bio-cultural processes,” Röttger-Rössler and colleagues (Röttger-Rössler, Scheidecker, Funk & Holodynski, 2015; Röttger-Rössler, Scheidecker, Jung, & Holodynski, 2013; Scheidecker, 2017) have compared child-rearing models and practices. Their field studies, based on anthropological methods, are revealing how the development of “socializing emotions” (e.g., shaming, praising, frightening) enables children in diverse cultures (ethnic groups in Madagascar, Indonesia, and Taiwan) to successfully internalize cultural and moral values related to emotions and behavior. For example, fear (in Taiwan) and anxiety (in Madagascar) turn out to be focal culture-specific socializing emotions.

The cultural models of independence and interdependence shape self-construals, emotions, cognitions, behavior, and conditions for emotion socialization from early childhood. For example, Taiwanese toddlers have been shown to express community-oriented emotions such as shame (Fung, 1999). This indicates that 30-month-old toddlers may already be sensitive to the sociomoral implications of their actions and experience guilt or shame when another person is the “victim” of their behavior; however, when they behave in ways that are “naughty” or “bad” they do not experience moral emotions. The precursors of guilt and shame (sociomoral emotions) in toddlerhood may be considered precursors of moral values.
Empirical studies further reveal that children’s experience of empathic distress and emotion regulation as precursors of prosocial values depends on the respective cultural model. Longitudinal studies on Japanese and German 2-, 3-, and 5-year-olds have revealed the impact of self-construal, emotional experience, and emotion regulation capacities in the development of moral values. The children were observed (videotaped) when they experienced another person’s mishap and distress (Friedlmeier & Trommsdorff, 1999; Trommsdorff & Friedlmeier, 2010). Children from these three age groups and both cultures showed sympathy (feeling with the other person), other-person concern, and the intention to reduce the other person’s disappointment by providing help. While no cultural differences in helping occurred for toddlers, 5-year-old Japanese compared to German children showed less helping behavior. German and Japanese toddlers were distressed due to unsuccessful self-other differentiation, low self-efficacy, and low capacity for emotion regulation at this stage of development. Toddlers may be motivated to help but feel incompetent to reduce the other person’s distress, thus making them feel helpless. Compared to Japanese children, who searched for support from their mother, German 5-year-old children could regulate their distress on their own and showed more helping behavior.

(p. 156) These cultural differences may be explained as due to the respective cultural self-construals. German children are developing an independent and Japanese children an interdependent self-construal embedded in a very close mother–child relationship of amae (emotional interdependence) (Doi, 1973). Accordingly, the preconditions for emotion regulation and active prosocial behavior differ for children from both cultures.

The capacity for regulating one’s own negative emotions when observing another person’s distress is a condition for constructive helping behavior. This can be observed in 5-year-old German and Israeli girls, who can already distance themselves from another person’s distress and are able to engage in helping behavior; in contrast, Japanese and Malay 5-year-old children still lack the necessary resources for helping; they are overwhelmed by their other-focused empathic emotions (Trommsdorff, Friedlmeier, & Mayer, 2007). Children developing an independent as compared to an interdependent self-construal are able to distinguish between their own and the other person’s emotions and regulate their self-focused distress at an earlier age. They are able to perceive the self and the target as separate entities.

While the cultural model of independence (focusing on separateness of self) is less relevant for Japanese and Malay children, it enables German and Israeli children to regulate their (other-focused) distress and engage in prosocial behavior at an earlier age (Trommsdorff et al., 2007). These culturally different emotion regulation strategies fostered by respective self-construals and cultural learning affect the cultural mindset and the subjective meaning of the “objectively” comparable situation in different cultural contexts. The respective cultural mindset may thus shape different modalities in the development of prosocial moral values. Due to a cultural mindset favoring interdependence compared to independence, learning of in-group-out-group differentiation may be more prominent in affecting the respective discriminant in the development of prosocial moral values.
The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

The cultural variability in emotion socialization has stimulated studies on caretakers’ naïve theories (an aspect of the “developmental niche”). This allows researchers to assess the cultural meaning of mothers’ strategies in emotion socialization. Comparing the socialization goals and strategies of mothers of 5- and 6-year-old children from five cultures revealed significant cultural differences in mothers’ values and beliefs regarding their children’s emotion regulations in different social situations (Cho, Song, Trommsdorff, Cole, Mishra, Shresta, & Park, 2016; Park, Trommdorff, & Lee, 2012; Trommsdorff & Cole, 2011; Wood, Cole, Mishra, Park, Shresta, & Trommsdorff, in prep.). Proactive sensitivity and strategies to minimize emotion expression are more preferred in cultures prioritizing interdependent values (Nepal or India). Reactive sensitivity and maximization strategies were more preferred by mothers in cultures prioritizing independence (the United States and Germany). Korean mothers favor both, probably because they are experiencing a transition to changing values (Song & Trommsdorff, 2016). This result underlines the importance of taking the dynamic quality of cultures into account and of studying changes in cultural mindsets and the socialization of moral values (Trommsdorff, 2009, 2012b).

To summarize, cultural models shape the socialization of emotions as a component of moral values while the experience, expression, and regulation of emotions is attached to moral evaluations. By internalizing the prevalent cultural mindset, children are engaged in regulating their self-development (p. 157) and related moral values in interaction with their social environment. Thus, agency is part of moral development in cultural contexts.

Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

In this chapter, I have discussed some factors explaining inter- and intracultural differences in the development of moral values. Future research will have to study the development of moral values in diverse cultural contexts influenced by changing value orientations.

Moral values are characterized by goals relevant for an individual’s self-construal and development of identity and focused on improving another person’s or social group’s well-being. Cultural models shape the development of moral values by respective cultural socialization, including interactions between biological and environmental factors, with environmental sensitivity moderating the impact of cultural socialization. Moral values develop according to culture-specific models of agency, fostered by the development of self-regulation, including interrelated emotional and rational aspects. In general, the development of moral values is embedded in the development of a cultural mindset.

Cultural models of independence and interdependence provide the meaning-making preconditions for the internalization of cultural values during socialization. Accordingly, future research on the development of moral values should study the cultural context in which children grow up and which shapes caretakers’ beliefs, socialization goals, and be-
behavior. For better understanding the development of moral values, it is necessary to study the development of the self in relation to the cultural environment and its ongoing changes. This includes studying the cultural meaning of socialization conditions for promoting the internalization of culturally prioritized moral values.

Due to the changing world with its multiple cultures and the complex nature of moral values and their development, I cannot offer sweeping concluding generalizations. Adequate theoretical and methodological foundations for moral values research are still missing. Verbal accounts of moral values as such do not tell the whole story since reporting about values needs a high level of cognitive ability for abstraction. Ecologically valid indicators for assessing moral values and their meaning are necessary. Field research and observations in natural settings should be complemented with structured experimental designs as suggested by De Guzman et al. (2014). While theoretical conceptualizations influence the choice of methods in the study of the development of moral values, the assessment of moral values in cultural contexts faces multiple difficulties. Moral values may be expressed in diverse ways in different cultures, age groups, and situations. The “cultural meaning” approach promoted by culture and indigenous psychologists (Bruner, 1990; Eckensberger, 2011; Geertz, 1973) prefers using cultural symbols, practices, and verbal accounts of subjective beliefs, theories, and interpretative schemes (Shweder, 2008). Other approaches prefer studying psychological and physiological reactions in laboratory and natural settings. For assessing the cultural meaning of moral values and behavior, multiple methods will have to be used.

In past research on moral development, moral values and their motivational quality and behavioral implications in interpersonal and cultural interactions have largely been neglected (Trommsdorff & Chen, 2012). Research on the development and function of moral values is pertinent especially in times of interconnected and changing societies and increasing digitalization, as individuals become aware of multiple and conflicting morals (Trommsdorff, 2019). So far, research is lacking on moral values when decisions on ethical dilemmas in the digital world are at stake. Algorithms for machine learning are based on human decisions, but who is regulating the algorithms, and who is responsible for the outcomes of the decisions? “Moral machines” may be used as platforms for gaining information on the variety of moral values and “naïve” opinions about morally “good” decisions and behavior. However, so far, moral values and their development have been uniformly operationalized as positive and socially desirable, while dismissing evidence from lay opinion and theological and philosophical traditions suggesting that morality and moral values may also have a darker side.

Growing up in high-risk environments may impact the development of moral values in a problematic way. Interpersonal contact with different cultural and moral values may induce uncertainty and the experience of social exclusion. Awareness of inequality and feelings of injustice due to aspired but unattainable living conditions may challenge adherence to presently held moral values, encourage the aggressive tendencies supported by respective social groups, and foster commitment to destructive moral values.
The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

Competing moral values of equal importance to each party may contribute to emphasizing in-group-out-group differences, thereby inducing intergroup conflict and aggression. In this situation, conflict resolution may be attempted by intensive reflexive discourse and by trying to understand each other’s position and intention. Still, perspective taking and rational empathy are not sufficient conditions for resolving moral conflicts unless both parties partially agree on superordinate moral values (as described in my introductory example). Whether these superordinate values are universal values and what universal moral values are like is again an open question.

Though moral values are rather stable, they may undergo changes during the life course due to adaptations to changing contexts, social encounters, intercultural relations, and other personal experience. So far, solid research is lacking on the conditions for changing moral values in individual development. Previously held “good” moral values may be abandoned in favor of goals blurring criteria for “good” and “evil” as, for example, when violence results from assumedly “higher” moral values promising assurance and moral truth. On the other hand, intercultural encounters promoting reasoning and communication about one’s own and another culture’s values may facilitate interpersonal and intercultural understanding, trust, and respect for moral value orientations different from one’s own.

Moral values organize individual development and behaviors in ways that fit with predominant cultural values and foster successful developmental outcomes. The development of moral values may allow one to integrate the cultural mindset and individual needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence across cultures. Thus, studying the development of moral values connects to a wide area of psychological and social phenomena. The development of moral values is a major developmental task in all cultures, but the meaning and importance of moral values vary widely across cultures, developmental stages, and situations.

Acknowledgments

This study was partly supported by a grant from the German Research Foundation (DFG GZ, TR 169/14-3) as part of the project “Developmental Conditions of Intentionality and Its Limits” within the interdisciplinary research group “Limits of Intentionality” (FOR 582) at the University of Konstanz, Germany.

References


The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts


The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts


The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts


The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts


The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts


Rothbaum, F., & Trommsdorff, G. (2007). Do roots and wings complement or oppose one another? The socialization of relatedness and autonomy in cultural context. In J. E. Grusec & P. Hastings (Eds.), *The handbook of socialization* (pp. 461-489). New York: Guilford.


The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts

The importance of cross-cultural research to the social sciences (pp. 203–230). Hove, UK: Psychology Press.


The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts


The Development of Moral Values in Cultural Contexts


Gisela Trommsdorff

Department of Psychology, University of Konstanz, Konstanz, Germany